



H.R. 813 – Santa Ana River Water Supply Enhancement Act of 2007

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 813 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Gary Miller (R-CA) on February 5, 2007. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources but was never considered.

H.R. 813 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 22, 2007.

**Note – Similar legislation was introduced in the 109th Congress by Representative Gary Miller (H.R. 177). This legislation passed under suspension of the rules by voice vote on October 18, 2006. The Senate held hearings on the legislation, but no further action was taken.*

SUMMARY

H.R. 813 allows the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the planning, design, and construction of natural treatment systems and wetlands for the flows of the Santa Ana River, California, and its tributaries into the Prado Basin.

There is authorized to be appropriated \$20,000,000 for the planning, design, and construction of the treatment systems.

H.R. 813 also allows the Secretary to assist agencies in projects to construct regional brine lines to export to the Pacific Ocean the salinity imported from the Colorado River. The projects are identified in the Salinity Management Study (prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California) and the Southern California Comprehensive Water Reclamation and Reuse Study (prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation).

The federal share for this project will not exceed 25% or \$40,000,000.

The legislation also allows the Secretary, in cooperation with the Chino Basin Watermaster, the Inland Empire Utilities Agency, and the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority to participate in the design, planning, and construction of the Lower Chino Dairy Area desalination demonstration and reclamation project.

The federal share for this project will not exceed 25% or \$50,000,000.

H.R. 813 requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish at the Orange County Water District located in Orange County, California, a center for assistance in the development and advancement of membrane technologies. This center will also provide educational support in the advancement of public understanding and acceptance of membrane-produced water supplies.

There are authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2013. This money will remain available until fully spent.

BACKGROUND

California gets most of its water from Colorado and portions of the state are very arid. Annually, California deals with numerous forest fires and is frequently faced with drought conditions. Rather than store water for later use, the state of California uses the water it has and recycles it to be used for drinking and irrigation.

The projects authorized in this legislation will provide alternative measures such as membrane technology and brine treatment plants for areas in Southern California to gain access to needed water.

Membrane technology uses a series of tubes to turn wastewater into purified water suitable for drinking. The tubes contain porous fibers that allow particles in the wastewater to be filtered out, leaving behind water suitable for drinking. Filtering wastewater isn't the most widely accepted method of manufacturing drinking water, so education is needed to convince the public that once the water is properly filtered it is available to drink.

The focus of the brine treatment plants is to filter out salt from the water that is discharged from the Santa Ana Regional Interceptor. This is the system used to treat wastewater and the concern is that if salt is allowed to be discharged it will end up in the Santa Ana River, which would in turn lead to contamination of the Orange County groundwater basin.

COST

At the time of publication the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has not yet scored this legislation.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Luke Hatzis at (202) 226-2302.